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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 001367

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (SEPTEMBER 1-30, 2008)

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¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provide information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES
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¶2. (SBU) Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony again failed to show up for a September 6 meeting in Rikwangba to resume peace talks. It was the fifth attempt to draw Kony out of the bush for talks since April. Kony reportedly phoned Acholi Paramount Chief Rwot Acana II on September 11 to explain his intentions. Acana said that Kony apologized for the delay in signing Final Peace Agreement (FPA), but insisted that the ICC indictments were to blame. UN Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano traveled to Juba on September 6 in anticipation of traveling with the LRA delegation to Rikwangba.

¶3. (SBU) Northern traditional and religious leaders traveled to Juba on September 17. The delegation was originally scheduled to travel on to Rikwangba, but Kony's failure to show on September 6 caused the trip's cancellation. In Juba, leaders met with Government of Southern Sudan mediator Riek Machar to discuss FPA challenges. Machar and the northern leaders, despite Kony's repeated failure to show, noted that they thought it was important for an LRA-affected conflict area delegation, led by Acana and accompanied by the LRA delegation, to meet with Kony.

¶4. (SBU) On September 17, six former LRA commanders, who defected between October and December 2007, returned to Gulu. The ex-commanders include Opio Makasi, Vincent Okema, Raphael Jalobo, George Okech, Sunday Kidega, and Alex Ojok. Traditional leaders and the Amnesty Commission held a welcoming ceremony for the defectors at Acana's palace on September 23. The traditional ceremony signified the ex-combatants' return to the Acholi community and represented the first stage of the Mato Oput cleansing ceremony. USAID funded the ceremony through the IOM. The UNDP also provided funding.

¶5. (SBU) Mercy Corps held a three-day, USAID-funded Peace Forum in the Pader District September 25-27. Parish-level Peace Committees, established and trained by Mercy Corps, joined key decision-makers

to build the capacity of local residents to participate in community peace and reconciliation activities. USAID Deputy Director, during her keynote address, underscored USG efforts to support conflict mitigation and peace-building in the north. The Pader Peace Forum was the largest event of its kind to be held in the relatively new Pader District and was well-attended by Ministers, Members of Parliament, central and local government officials, and members of the Ugandan press.

¶6. (SBU) USG Activities: The Ambassador, DCM, and P/E Chief attended UN-Special Envoy Chissano's debriefings on the status of the LRA peace process. The DCM and USAID Deputy Mission Director discussed the future of the peace process and implementation of the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP) with local government leaders and non-governmental organizations during a September 22-25 visit to Kitgum District.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
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¶7. (SBU) Oxfam released its "From Emergency to Recovery: Rescuing Northern Uganda's Transition" report on September 4. The report indicated that despite the absence of an FPA, improved security in the north had allowed over 900,000 IDPs to return home. Oxfam noted, however, that recovery actors and services were not keeping up with the pace of return on the ground. The report suggested that many IDPs were also worried about the future of an FPA, and noted that the most vulnerable camp residents--widows, orphans, elderly people, the disabled and the sick--are being left behind in the camps, and that the dismantling of camp governing structures had left a leadership vacuum. Oxfam called on the UN to articulate a transition strategy, recommended that the GOU publicize information on its transition programs, and urged the international community to

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support the PRDP.

¶8. (U) USG Activities: CJTF-HOA launched a Veterinary Civic Action Project (VETCAP) on September 22 in Gulu district. The VETCAP is expected to treat and inoculate up to 33,000 livestock. As part of the VETCAP program, CJTF-HOA specialists will work with Ugandan veterinarians, veterinary students, and district health and agricultural officials to provide care to livestock in and around the Gulu and Amuru Districts. On September 22, the DCM dedicated a CTJF-HOA-funded library and three buildings at the Kitgum District Referral Hospital.

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SECURITY UPDATE
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¶9. (U) According to MONUC, ten LRA rebels ambushed and kidnapped a group of 16 Congolese villagers on their way to a market along the Dungu/Firaz/Isoro Road on September 4-5. The villagers were from Dimba. LRA rebels reportedly raped the women, killed two villagers, and wounded three others. Angry villagers reportedly killed two LRA rebels in the scuffle. The Congolese military was informed of the incident.

¶10. (SBU) There were several additional reports of LRA attacks and abductions in Kiliwa, Duru, and Dungu, DRC, between September 17 and ¶20. An estimated ninety school children were reportedly abducted from the Duru Institute and Kiliwa Primary School and a local chief and his son were killed. Ugandan Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda said that eight Congolese were killed in the attacks. Catholic missionaries report that the LRA looted, abducted children, and burned down buildings. MONUC confirmed the attacks and both MONUC and the Congolese military reportedly began deploying in the area. Public demonstrations in Dungu have put pressure on the Government of DRC to take action against the LRA. UPDF Spokesman Major Paddy Ankunda said that the UPDF was prepared to defend the border area from an LRA incursion.

¶11. (U) On September 18, LRA rebels reportedly killed two Sudanese civilians when they attacked a Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army

(SPLA) barrack at Sakure. Col. Joseph Ngere, a senior official in southern Sudan's Equatoria State Government, told BBC that the LRA rebels carried out several attacks after killing an unspecified number of Congolese civilians. He reported that the rebels also burned houses among other abuses. The Central African Republic (CAR) government reportedly announced its willingness to join the regional military solution to end the LRA insurgency in the region. According to press reports, Sudan and the DRC have committed themselves to deal with the LRA militarily if the rebels do not sign the FPA.

¶12. (U) On September 9, Harris Woboya, Coordinator of the Mine Action Program, reported that Lira District is free of unexploded ordnance following a five-month collection exercise. Woboya said the team continues to search for unexploded ordnance in Kitgum, Amuru, Pader, Gulu and Kasese Districts.

FROM THE MEDIA AND THE WEB

¶13. (U) The September 15 edition of the government-owned daily "The New Vision" featured an op-ed written by UPDF spokesperson Paddy Ankunda entitled "Juba Peace Talks Still on Despite Kony's Elusiveness." Ankunda was among the international observers who traveled to Juba on September 6 expecting to witness the peace agreement signing. President Chissano had expected to fly to Juba, move to Rikwangba on the same day, sign the agreement and return to Juba with the "good news." On arrival in Juba, the UN team was told that Kony had sent two of his senior officers the day before, and that they had picked up drugs the rebels had asked for and departed. Ankunda writes that he immediately knew that they had been duped. From that point on, Kony's phones were either off or not answered. President Chissano was so disappointed that he announced that this was the last time he would try to meet Kony. According to Major Ankunda, reports indicate that the rebels have been abducting, cultivating, training and establishing contacts.

¶14. (U) Ankunda also commented that if it is true that the LRA were attacked by the DRC forces and MONUC, it was long overdue. Under the Tripartite Plus mechanism, the DRC and MONUC should have attacked the LRA by June. The UPDF and the SPLA, under the

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agreement, were supposed to support the operation with intelligence information. He added that because Kony has refused to sign the agreement, the GOU has nothing to show the ICC and the UNSC to support suspension of the arrest warrants. He added, however, that the door for peace talks will remain open and that the GOU is willing to support anyone who tries to get Kony to sign the FPA.

¶15. (U) Resolve Uganda issued a memo to U.S. Policymakers entitled "Crucial Window of Opportunity Must Not Be Missed" dated September 2008. The recommendations for the U.S. Congress included: "passage of legislation to ensure U.S. support for the comprehensive reconstruction of the north, authorization of USD 35 million over the next five years, and to ensure the U.S. Administration leads multilateral efforts to rebuild northern Uganda and address the continued LRA threat." Resolve Uganda recommended that "the U.S. Administration hold the Government of Uganda accountable for its responsibilities to coordinate the recovery process and bring northern Uganda to a development level equal to the rest of the country; convene a conference of major donors in Uganda to ensure funding commitments are secured for a sustained recovery process; appoint a full-time diplomat to work with the U.N. and other regional governments to advance dialogue with the LRA leaders, defections of LRA members, protection of civilians, and a viable strategy to arrest rebel leader Joseph Kony, and commence an inter-agency process to assess prospects and develop a strategy for apprehending LRA leader Joseph Kony, in coordination with regional governments and U.N. forces."

HOOVER